UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PRODUCTION AND MARKETING ADMINISTRATION
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AGRICULTURAL MARKETING

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PART I: ----- GRADING POULTRY AND EGGS (7½ minutes)

ANNOUNCER: The marketing of America's food is of direct concern to everyone -- farmer, distributor, and consumer. Today, Station _____ presents another in a series of broadcasts designed to tell farm and city people more about the latest developments in the field of agricultural marketing... During the war, poultrymen concentrated on producing the largest possible quantity of poultry and eggs to help feed our fighting men, our allies, and our civilian population. But now, poultry marketing is more competitive. Efficient producers are beginning to put more emphasis on safeguarding their share of the postwar market by selling the best possible poultry and eggs. And when it comes to selling high quality poultry and eggs, more and more producers and consumers are discovering the importance of the grading service of the United States Department of Agriculture... Today, we're fortunate to have in our studio _____, who's connected with the agency which handles this grading service -- the Production and Marketing Administration.

PMA: Well, _____, as you know, I'm not really connected with the poultry grading part of P-M-A's work, but I come into very close contact with it... enough to know that it is a real aid to the marketing of quality poultry products. It helps farmers to get a larger return on their better-grade merchandise. It also helps consumers buy a better quality product for their food dollar. And as far as the distributive trades are concerned, the service is valuable in helping stabilize the marketing of poultry products.

ANN: All the more reason why most of our listeners will be interested in becoming more familiar with the grading of poultry and eggs. _____, just what poultry items come under this grading service?

PMA: Practically every item the poultry farmer produces -- every item the poultry dealer sells can be graded according to Federal standards. And often it's possible to carry the grading process through to the retail level, where the consumer does her purchasing.

ANN: Suppose, then, we start off with one major item -- eggs. Federal grading of "hen fruit" has been going on for a good long time, hasn't it?

PMA: Ever since 1920. The egg grading service arose out of the industry's need for a common language -- for uniform standards on which to base its trading. Perhaps I can describe it for you the way Lester Kilpatrick does -- he's the man who heads up the poultry and egg grading office in the Northeast. And he says..."Egg grading was set in 1920... it incubated during the twenties... it hatched around 1930... and it's been growing beautifully ever since."

ANN: That's a very colorful way to picture it, _____.

PMA: It's a pretty accurate way, too. Since its beginning about 30 years ago, the egg grading service has grown steadily. Last year, some 15 million cases of eggs were Federally graded in this country.

ANN: I believe some of this work is done in cooperation with the States.

PMA: Yes, that's true of all grading. And in the case of poultry and eggs, that cooperation is largely responsible for the growth of the service -- the close cooperation between the various State departments of agriculture, the extension services of the State colleges, and the United States Department of Agriculture. And that's particularly true up here in the Northeast, where we have a great many State inspectors who are licensed by the Federal Government.

ANN: Will you tell us something about the actual grade standards for eggs, _____?

PMA: Well, both the wholesale and consumer grade standards for eggs are based on specifications which have been set up by the Department for individual shell eggs. The grades run from "Double-A" quality, down to "C" quality.

ANN: And what determines the quality grade into which any single egg will be placed?

PMA: Condition of the shell is the starting point. For all four of these grades, the shell has to be clean and unbroken. But in the lower two grades, the shape may be slightly abnormal.

ANN: But what about interior quality -- doesn't the grader have trouble telling what's inside the shell?

PMA: Not much trouble, _____. Through the process of "candling", he's able to determine the condition of the air cell in the egg, condition of the yolk, and the white.

ANN: "Candling" means holding the egg before a light, so that the rays of light penetrate the egg?

PMA: That's right. And by "candling", the grader can look for a fairly small air cell... a clear and firm white... a well-centered, nearly perfect yolk -- those are the things that determine into what quality grade the egg is placed.

ANN: Now, do both the wholesale and consumer grade standards follow the same grading pattern -- "Double-A", "A", "B", and "C"?

PMA: The consumer grades use those same letters -- they're known as "U.S. Consumer Grade Double-A", "U.S. Consumer Grade A", and so on. When a housewife buys a dozen Government-graded eggs at her corner store, she knows that when those eggs were graded, they met the specifications for the U.S. consumer grade marked on the carton.

ANN: And wholesale grades?

PMA: Well, in wholesale trading, these letter grades are usually replaced with word designations -- "U.S. Specials", "U.S. Extras", "U.S. Standards", or "U.S. Trades", in that order. And in addition, wholesale specifications have been set up for stained, dirty, check, and "no grade" eggs.

ANN: And do the various sizes of eggs have anything to do with the grade specifications?

PMA: No. And that's a point on which many consumers are confused. The grading service sets up minimum weight standards for "Jumbos", "Extra Large", and so on down to the "Peewee" eggs. And, of course, the heavier and larger eggs usually bring higher prices, both at wholesale and at retail. But size itself has nothing to do with quality of the eggs.

ANN: That seems to give us a good picture of the egg-grading service...

PMA: And the poultry-grading service is just about as easy to explain.

ANN: Follows pretty much the same pattern?

PMA: Yes, the same letter grades are used for dressed poultry -- "U.S. Grade Double-A" on through "U.S. Grade C". "U.S. Double-A" is the grade for perfect commercial specimens. Next come "Grade A" birds, which are of excellent table quality. "Grade B" dressed poultry is a good table quality. And "U.S. Grade C" is an economy grade -- it doesn't meet the higher standards, but it's still good for many cooking purposes.

ANN: That pattern holds true for all types of poultry, then?

PMA: Not quite. That's the line-up for dressed chickens, and turkey. But for the miscellaneous classes -- ducks, geese, guineas, and squabs -- the grades range from "A" to "C". There is no "U.S. Double-A" grade.

ANN: I imagine that a grader looks, first, to see how fleshy a bird is?

PMA: That's one thing. And he wants to know how well the bird is dressed... how free it is of pin feathers... and so on. Of course, he considers what the class of poultry is -- you wouldn't expect a broiler, for example, to be as fleshy as a roaster.

ANN: Now, how's the consumer to know about these poultry grades?

PMA: In one of two ways, _____. Some poultry is individually tagged with the grade that's been assigned to it.

ANN: You mean a tag is attached to the bird?

PMA: That's it. A tag or label is fastened with a seal passing through the wing -- so that the tag can't be removed, and used again.

ANN: And what's the other way for the consumer to identify a Federally-graded bird?

PMA: Actually, it's a short-cut -- to save the time and cost of individual tagging. The wholesale container is marked with the U. S. grade. Either way, the consumer can check to make sure she's getting the quality she's paying for.

ANN: What about "eviscerated" poultry, _____. It seems to be growing in popularity.

PMA: It is. And the Federal grading service has kept pace by setting up standards for these ready-to-cook birds.

ANN: And for these ready-to-cook birds, do the grades run from "U.S. Grade Double-A" on down through "U.S.Grade C"?

PMA: For eviscerated turkeys, they do. But for eviscerated chickens, "U. S. Grade A" is the top grade, followed by "Grade B", and then "U.S. Grade C".

ANN: Well, I guess that covers every type of poultry, except the live birds -- is there any grading service for live poultry?

PMA: Yes, _____. Live poultry is graded as either "U.S. No. 1", or "U.S. No. 2". But the Department is now considering possible changes in the grade standards for live poultry. Some of the people in the industry would rather have a three-grade system for live poultry grading. Other members of the trade apparently would like to keep the present system.

ANN: Well, the consideration being given to those ideas seems to prove your point that the United States Department of Agriculture keeps its marketing services keyed to the changing times. And this information about poultry and egg grading fills us in on the standardization work that's so important a part of the Department's marketing services.

(USE FOLLOWING CLOSE IF PART I IS USED AS A SEPARATE SCRIPT.)

ANN: ... Thanks very much, _____ for being with us today to tell us about another important phase of agricultural marketing... Friends, you've been listening to an interview with _____, of the Production and Marketing Administration -- another of Station _____'s public service broadcasts, brought to you with the cooperation of the Production and Marketing Administration.

(MORE)

PART II: ----- SEEDS FOR SPRING PLANTING (7½ minutes)

(USE FOLLOWING INTRODUCTION IF PART II IS USED AS A SEPARATE SCRIPT.)

ANN: The marketing of America's food is of direct concern to everyone... farmer, distributor, and consumer. Today, Station _____ presents another in a series of broadcasts designed to tell farm and city people more about timely developments in the field of agricultural marketing. Our studio guest today is _____, of the Production and Marketing Administration.

PMA: A timely topic at this season of the year, _____ is the subject of seeds. And seed marketing provides a good example of one type of marketing service performed by the United States Department of Agriculture for the benefit of farmers and consumers -- the regulatory work it does to insure fair trading.

ANN: Well, farmers, of course, are most concerned about seed, _____ -- from a practical, commercial point of view. Then there are the home gardeners .. millions of them... who are thinking and talking about garden seeds. And many more people are planning to buy grass seed, flower seeds, and other types of seed for other types of planting.

PMA: To all these people, the seed they buy is mighty important. And to all of us, the quality and the quantity of seeds offered for sale to farmers and gardeners each year have a lot to do with the quality and the quantity of food we'll have to eat.

ANN: What about the supply of seeds? Will there be plenty for everyone, _____?

PMA: As far as field seeds go, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics recently estimated that seed growers would have less to offer dealers and farmers this year than they did last year. That's largely because of the drop in production in 1947. That means that we won't have quite as many field seeds as we had from the 1946 crop, but there ought to be enough to meet all essential needs.

ANN: I understand the biggest drop in these field seed crops was in red clover. But how about vegetable seeds -- to touch on a subject that's pretty close to everyone's backyard?

PMA: There's no trouble there. Production of some vegetable seeds last year was under the high wartime average, but others were above the previous year. And total production of all vegetable seeds last year was pretty close to the 1946 level.

ANN: I understand that the number of certified seed potatoes grown last year was the biggest ever.

PMA: It was. That's the sixth consecutive year in which seed potato production has gone up. In 1947, the total was more than double the ten-year average. Incidentally, the Northeast accounted for over half that seed potato production -- most of the total in this region being concentrated in Maine.

PMA: I'm sure all our listeners are glad to hear that there will be a plentiful supply of vegetable seeds this year. That'll be important for the truck farmers in this part of the country. And for all the town and city people who are planting home gardens. Is the Department of Agriculture still encouraging Victory Gardens?

PMA: Yes indeed. Only they're not called "Victory Gardens" any more. They're called "Freedom Gardens". And the goal we're looking for is 20 million of these "Freedom Gardens" in 1948. World food supplies are still short and Secretary Anderson has said that, by achieving this goal, home gardeners will be making an important contribution to our foreign aid program.

ANN: That's certainly an important objective in view of the news from abroad. But I'm sure that a lot of commercial vegetable growers are wondering if all these "Freedom Gardens" won't be offering them some serious competition.

PMA: On the face of it, it would seem so, _____. But as a matter of fact it has worked out in just the opposite way. The Department not long ago made a survey to see what effect the increase in home gardens had on purchases of fruits and vegetables. They studied a group of families living in cities. It turned out that the more vegetables they grew at home, the better they liked them. The result is that they not only eat their own produce, but they buy more fruits and vegetables in their local store. In other words, families with home gardens tend to buy more fresh produce then families who don't garden.

ANN: That ought to make everyone happy,_____ -- the farmers, the nutritionists, and the home gardeners. But to get back for a moment to the seeds from which these vegetable gardens grow... One of the things that's always amazed me is the accuracy with which dealers can distribute all these tiny seeds, without getting them mixed up.

PMA: A lot of care goes into the growing and packing of seeds so as to achieve just that result, _____. And to insure that farmers and gardeners receive just what they are paying for in seeds, they have the protection of the Federal Seed Act of 1939, and the seed laws in all the States.

ANN: The Federal law, I assume, covers those seeds which are sold or shipped across State lines -- while the State laws apply to seeds grown and sold within the State's borders.

PMA: That's right. That way, seed buyers are protected by all the provisions of both the State and Federal laws. In that Federal law, there are two separate catagories of seeds. One is for the so-called "agricultural seeds" -- those for grass, forage, and field crops. The other is for vegetable seeds. As far as this first group goes, the law requires that the label give a detailed description of exactly what is inside the package -- for example, it has to show the kinds and varieties of seeds in the package and how much there is of each. It has to show where some kinds of seed were grown, and identify the dealers and shippers involved in moving it across State boundaries. And the label must tell the buyer the percentage of germination -- how much of the pure seed in the package is likely to grow. Finally, it has to show just how much of the seeds are weeds -- especially noxious weeds.

ANN: By "noxious weeds", you're referring to things like quackgrass, bindweed, wild-onion, and so on.

PMA: That's right. Each State has set up its own list of undesirable weeds, and the Federal law requires that the labeling of noxious weeds on the seed container meet both Federal and State requirements. Also, the label must show when the lot of seeds from which this container comes was originally tested for germination. The seeds can not be shipped interstate more than six months after the date the last test was made.

ANN: You seldom see all that information on a package of vegetable seeds.

PMA: No, the labeling requirements are a little different for vegetable seeds. But the law still offers a lot of protection to the seed buyer. In the case of vegetable seeds, the Federal law sets up certain standards for the percentage of germination in the lot. If the packet doesn't meet this standard, then the label has to have the words "Below Standard" on it and give quite a bit of information about the actual germination. In any case, the label has to identify the kind and variety of vegetable seed and identify the shippers.

ANN: What else does the Federal Seed Act require?

PMA: We won't have time to go into all the provisions of the law. We've already gotten pretty detailed. But some of the other provisions protect the grower against false advertising and labeling, against inferior foreign seed, and against the sale to growers of seeds that were orginally imported for manufacturing or feeding purposes. And the law also requires seed producers and dealers to keep records for three years, to aid in enforcing the law.

ANN: All that seems to offer a great deal of protection to the farmer and home gardener.

PMA: It does. Most of the seed houses observe the law carefully and the Department of Agriculture makes every effort to see that all the provisions of the laws are enforced. But seed buyers still should be very careful to read the labels of any seed package they purchase -- particularly in regard to the date when the seed was tested for germination. It's poor economy to try and save money by buying seed of poor quality. As I said before, the law says that the last test must have been made within six months before the seed is sold. And city dwellers should remember that lawn seed comes into the category of "agricultural seeds". So the label must show the percentage of undesirable weeds as well as all the other information we mentioned.

ANN: That's a good tip, _____... Now just one more question before we wind up. How about growing one's own seed? Is that a good idea?

PMA: That depends on a lot of things, _____. A small gardener who has the time, and facilities, and technical knowledge can often grow better seed than he could buy on the open market, and he can select plants that do best in his own local environment. But a lot of work and "know-how" is required to grow and handle seed. For the vast majority of home and small farm gardeners, the best advice is to buy all the seed they need. Otherwise they run the danger of carrying over plant diseases from one crop year to another, and of cross pollination among different varieties. And even if they could avoid these dangers, most small gardeners simply don't have the facilities for drying and storing seeds properly.

ANN: That sounds like good advice, _____... I want to thank you for being with us today on another of Station _____'s public service broadcasts on agricultural marketing... Friends, you've been listening to an interview with _____, of the Production and Marketing Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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